



PRESS RELEASE

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MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS OF LOCAL DRUG RING ARRESTED

PHOENIX -- Several members of a large scale Mesa and Phoenix-based methamphetamine trafficking operation were taken into federal custody yesterday as a result of a joint operation with the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Mesa Police Department. A federal grand jury here returned a thirteen-count indictment against thirteen individuals on March 2, 2005 on drug-related charges involving methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana and other drugs. During the execution of a federal search warrant on a residence in Phoenix on April 14, 2005, investigators discovered methamphetamine, suspected methamphetamine pipes, drug paraphernalia and numerous weapons all within proximity of a 10-year-old male.

The investigation indicated that the organization was distributing pound quantities of high-grade methamphetamine throughout Mesa and Phoenix for redistribution to the Midwest and its environs. These arrests dealt a substantial blow to a violent, poly-drug criminal organization involved in the importation and distribution of methamphetamine from the communities of Mesa to various states in the Midwest. Every day this organization operated, it put the citizens of Mesa and the surrounding valley as well as the citizens from other states at great risk.

Taken into custody on April 14, 2005 on a variety of drug-related charges were John R. Schrewder, 68, and Tracy Schrewder, 44, both of Phoenix; Eriberto Soto, aka Eddie Pacheco, aka Eri, 29; Jose Corrales, aka Josesito, 19; Ernesto Elizondo, 41; and Elodia Pacheco, 46, all of Mesa, Ariz. All of the above defendants appeared before a U.S. Magistrate

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in Phoenix for their initial appearance on Thursday, April 14, 2005. All were detained pending their detention hearings. Eriberto Soto, Elodia Pacheco, Jose Corrales and Ernesto Elizondo are scheduled for a detention hearing on Tuesday, April 19, 2005 at 2:30 p.m. before Judge Duncan. The Shrewders are scheduled for their detention hearing on Wednesday, April 20, 2005 at 11:30 a.m. also in front of Judge Duncan.

Three of the indicted individuals were already in custody on other charges. Rene Lopez Ramirez, aka Ramiro, 33, was already detained in Chicago and Jesus Lopez Estrada, aka Chuy, 24; and Michael Slowik, 47, were both already detained in Maricopa County.

Six indicted individuals are not in custody at this time. Dinah Walker, 32, of Phoenix; Teodoro Garcia Lopez, aka Valentin, 33, of Phoenix; Marcela Pacheco, aka Pablo, 33, of Mesa, Ariz.; Leslie Sainz, aka Guarinche, 25, of Mesa, Ariz.; Levi Mendivil Vega, 20, of Mexico; and an unknown male known only by the first name of Temu.

On April 14, 2005, Gregory A. White, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, and Gregory G. Lockhart, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, announced the unsealing of a 30-count indictment, alleging numerous drug-trafficking violations, against 55 defendants including Arizona residents Slowik, Walker and both Michael and Tracy Shrewder.

The investigation preceding the Arizona indictment was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Mesa Police Department, and the U.S. Marshal's Service. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Phoenix Police Department provided assistance during the execution of the federal search warrant. U.S. Attorney Paul Charlton stated that "This case highlights the outstanding cooperation between local and federal law enforcement. This investigation is ongoing and we expect more indictments to come as a result of this great effort."

DEA Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum said, "With these arrests we have decimated a violent drug organization from top to bottom whose tentacles stretched from the Southwest Border into the Midwest. Together with our law enforcement partners, we have depleted the fuel that drives the organization—their money. For the communities who would have been offered this powerfully addictive drug, the impact of this operation is enormous."

Chief Dennis Donna, Mesa Police Department, added that "This cooperative investigation between the Mesa Police Department and DEA is an example of a federal and local agency working to make our neighborhoods safer for all. Taking violent people off the street and disrupting the flow of illicit drugs, especially methamphetamine, will help with the

identify theft problem, burglaries and violent crime caseloads.”

Arizona is a primary transshipment point for Mexican methamphetamine smuggled across the southwest border. The highly addictive drug is directly connected with many other crimes, including domestic abuse, child neglect, burglary, auto theft and identity theft.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The prosecution is being handled by Timothy Duax, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

A copy of the indictment and a penalty sheet are available upon request from the PAO.

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